WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of collecting data regarding an application
    infrastructure component coupled to an application
    infrastructure, comprising:

    receiving a communication pertaining to the application
    infrastructure component;

    examining the communication to obtain a characteristic of
    the application infrastructure component; and

    forwarding the communication.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the communication is intended
    for the application infrastructure component and the
    communication is forwarded to the application infrastructure
    component.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the communication originates
    with the application infrastructure component and the
    communication is forwarded to an intended recipient.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the communication is a packet
    adhering to the OSI reference model.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein the packet is a TCP/IP
    packet.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein examining the communication
    further comprises examining layers 2, 3, 4, or 7 of the
    TCP/IP packet.

7. The method of claim 5, wherein the data regarding the

application infrastructure component includes at least one of operating system information, network information, the application infrastructure component's CPU utilization, file system information, application information, and hardware information.

8. An apparatus configured to implement the method of claim 1.

9.   A method of collecting data regarding an application
infrastructure component in an application infrastructure ,
comprising

receiving a first request for an application
infrastructure component; and

collecting data on the application infrastructure
component, wherein collecting data further comprises sending
a second request to the application infrastructure component
and receiving a response to the second request from the
application infrastructure component.

10.   The method of claim 9, further comprising

forwarding the first request to the application
infrastructure component; and

receiving a response to the first request from the
application infrastructure component.

11.   The method of claim 10, further comprising

receiving a third request for an application
infrastructure component;

forwarding the third request to the application
infrastructure component;

receiving a response to the third request from the
application infrastructure component; and

forwarding the response to the third request to the
intended recipient.

12. The method of claim 9, wherein the first request is
different from the second request.

13. The method of claim 12, wherein the first request and the third request are substantially identical connection requests.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein the first response and the third response are substantially identical connect-ok responses.

15. The method of claim 14, wherein collecting data on the application infrastructure component further comprises querying an agent residing on the application infrastructure component.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein the data regarding the application infrastructure component includes at least one of operating system information, network information, information on the application infrastructure component's CPU utilization, file system information, hardware information, and application information.

17. An apparatus configured to implement the method of claim 9.

18.   A method of collecting data regarding an application infrastructure, comprising:

collecting data regarding one or more devices in the application infrastructure using a component; andassembling information on an application infrastructure topology from the collected information.

19.   The method of claim 18, further comprising transmitting data between at least two devices in an application infrastructure.

20.   The method of claim 19, wherein collecting data occurs during the transmission of substantially normal data.

21.   The method of claim 18, wherein the application infrastructure topology is a physical topology or a logical topology.

22.   The method of claim 21, wherein the application infrastructure topology is represented in a graph.

23.   An apparatus configured to implement the method of claim 18.

24. A data processing system readable medium having code for
     collecting data regarding an application infrastructure
     component on a network, wherein the code is embodied within
     the data processing system readable medium, the code
     comprising instructions for:
          receiving a communication pertaining to the
     application infrastructure component;
          examining the communication to obtain data regarding
     the application infrastructure component; and
          forwarding the communication.

25. The data processing system readable medium of claim 24,
     wherein the communication originates with the application
     infrastructure component and the communication is forwarded
     to an intended recipient.

26. The data processing system readable medium of claim 25,
     wherein the communication is a packet adhering to the OSI
     reference model.

27. The data processing system readable medium of claim 26,
     wherein the packet is a TCP/IP packet.

28. The data processing system readable medium of claim 27,
     wherein examining the communication further comprises
     examining layers 2, 3, 4, or 7 of the TCP/IP packet.

29. The data processing system readable medium of claim 27,
     wherein the data regarding the application infrastructure

component includes at least one of operating system
information, network information, the application
infrastructure component's CPU utilization, file system
information, application information, and hardware
information.

30. A data processing system readable medium having code for
     collecting data regarding an application infrastructure
     component in an application infrastructure, wherein the code
     is embodied within the data processing system readable
     medium, the code comprising instructions for:
          receiving a first request for an application
     infrastructure component; and
          collecting data on the application infrastructure
     component, wherein collecting data further comprises sending
     a second request to the application infrastructure component
     and receiving a response to the second request from the
     application infrastructure component.

31. The data processing system readable medium of claim 30,
     further comprising instructions for:
          forwarding the first request to the application
     infrastructure component; and
          receiving a response to the first request from the
     application infrastructure component.

32. The data processing system readable medium of claim 31,
     further comprising instructions for:
          receiving a third request for an application
     infrastructure component;
          forwarding the third request to the application
     infrastructure component;
          receiving a response to the third request from the
     application infrastructure component; and
          forwarding the response to the third request to the

intended recipient.

33. The data processing system readable medium of claim 30, wherein the first request is different from the second request.

34. The data processing system readable medium of claim 33, wherein the first request and the third request are substantially identical connection requests.

35. The data processing system readable medium of claim 34, wherein the first response and the third response are substantially identical connect-ok responses.

36. The data processing system readable medium of claim 35, wherein collecting data on the application infrastructure component further comprises querying an agent residing on the application infrastructure component.

37. The data processing system readable medium of claim 36, wherein the data regarding the application infrastructure component includes at least one of operating system information, network information, information on the application infrastructure component's CPU utilization, file system information, hardware information, and application information.

38. A data processing system readable medium having code for collecting data regarding an application infrastructure, wherein the code is embodied within the data processing system readable medium, the code comprising instructions for:

collecting data regarding one or more devices coupled to the network using a component; and

assembling information on an application infrastructure topology from the collected information.

39. The data processing system readable medium of claim 38, further comprising instructions for transmitting data between at least two devices in the application infrastructure.

40. The data processing system readable medium of claim 39, wherein collecting data occurs during the transmission of substantially normal data.

41. The data processing system readable medium of claim 38, wherein the application infrastructure topology is a physical topology or a logical topology.

42. The data processing system readable medium of claim 41, wherein the application infrastructure topology is represented in a graph.